Comptrollers Go Expeditionary

by Lieutenant Colonel Lilly Lopez

A s recent as five years ago, you had to be at the right place at the right time to have the opportunity to support a contingency operation at a deployed location. Now, at almost every base and every job, you can expect to deploy. Comptrollers are expeditionary!

We are staying in-sync with the rest of the Air Force as it shifts operational focus from home station to deployed operations. **General John P. Jumper**, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, articulated this change in mindset in his *Chief's Sight Picture* (**5 August 2002**)—*Essential to this cultural change is our universal understanding that the natural state of our Air Force when we are 'doing business' is not home station operations but deployed operations*.

Our comptroller community is taking on the wartime expeditionary role. We curently deploy over fifteen percent of our comptroller personnel, i.e., 500 people within a typical Air Expeditionary Force (**AEF**) Cycle, every 15 months, in support of steady state taskings like **OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH**. Throughout the full spectrum of operations, from contingency missions to major theater war, requirements for comptroller personnel at deployed locations, can easily triple, depending on the magnitude or complexity of the operation. **Figure 1** illustrates how the Air Force is organized into five AEF pairs assigned to lead wings in support of AEF Cycles 3 and 4. We are currently supporting Cycle 3, with Cycle 4 beginning in June 2003.

Figure 1. Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) Cycles 3 and 4 Lead Wings

Requirements are sourced from the Total Force with active duty and Air Reserve Component (Air National Guard, Air Reserves) supporting specific mission capabilities (**MISCAP**) as needed. Comptroller MISCAP statements serve as our menu to planners and supported commanders of what we can bring to the table in support of an array of operational taskings. Our MISCAPs are designed to be flexible enough to provide individual capabilities or packages of capabilities depending on the requirement. Standard Unit Type Codes (**UTC**) define each capability and, for the most part, mirror home station support.

Depending on the location and mission, however, deployed operations can vary signficantly from typical day-to-day home station support. For example, comptroller personnel deployed in support of opening a bare base can expect to function as paying and disbursement agents. **Figures 2** and **3** display all the UTC codings, number of personnel, level of training and experience required, and a description of the mission capability for each UTC.

Comptrollers support an extensive assortment of taskings. Most of these taskings, like **OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM** and **OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH**, fall within the AEF construct. We also have people ready to go on a moments notice to provide paying agent support for Tanker Airlift Combat Element (**TALCE**) base assessment and initial setup operations. We support key missions of shorter duration, such as providing financial assistance (e.g., paying for landing fees in Africa) for noncombatant evacuations operations and repatriation taskings and sustainability and support operations. Additionally, we also have personnel deployed in-place in Korea on short-tour assignments.

As our deployment taskings are greater than ever before, it is critical that every airman be ready to deploy on a moments notice. Everyone must know when he or she is vulnerable to deploy. Your window for deploying, also known as the AEF *bucket* or *window*, and how your position is coded drive the timing of your readiness to successfully fulfill your mission in a deployed environment.

There are two ways to categorize deployment availability: not deployable, deployable. Students, training, and pipeline (STP),joint, and recruiting positions are not deployable. Additionally, within our career field, we do not code enlisted 3-level (apprentice) experience positions for deployment in comptroller positions. Deployable positions can be on standard UTCs as shown in **Figures 2** and **3** or in associate UTCs. A position is postured as an associate UTC when the mission capability does not meet a steady state or wartime requirement. For example, an acquisition cost analyst would be postured in an associate UTC. It is important to keep in mind, however, that it is the position that is postured, not the individual. In this example, the individual can still fill a mission capability they meet resulting from previous work experience.

Figure 2. One Person Unit Type Code (UTC) Based on Unit Manning Document Positions

Unit Type Code (UTC)	Personnel Tasked	Enlisted Skill Level /Officer Rank*	Mission Capabilities (MISCAP) Description
XFFA1	1	5 level	Financial Services Specialist
XFFA2	1	7 level	Paying Agent/Financial Manager
XFFA3	1	Major	Comptroller
XFFA4	1	Capt	Financial Analysis Officer
XFFA5	1	Capt	Financial Services Officer
XFFA7	1	5 level	Financial Specialist (Actg Liaison)
XFFAF	1	7 level	Analysis Tech (Budget)
XFFAZ	1	Not Applicable	Used when *position* does not match a specific MISCAP

* Enlisted Skill Levels: 3 level = Apprentice, 5 level = Journeyman, 7 level = Craftsman, 9 level = Superintendent

Figure 3. Package Unit Type Codes (UTCs) Based on Unit Manning Document Positions

Unit Type Code (UTC)	Personnel Tasked	Enlisted Skill Level /Officer Rank*	Mission Capabilities (MISCAP) Description
XFFAB	9	One 9, two 7, and six 5 levels	Independent Lead Team (Large Comptroller Shop)
XFFAC	5	One 9, one 7, three 5 levels	Dependent Lead Team (Small Comptroller Shop)
XFFAD	3	One 7, two 5 levels	Financial Management Team (vendor pay, commercial services, cashier)
XFFAE	2	One 7, one 5 level	Financial Services Team (paying agent, vendor pay, commercial services, cashier)
XFFAG	0	Not Applicable	Equipment (safe, laptop, regs, etc)

·Enlisted Skill Levels: 3 level = Apprentice, 5 level = Journeyman, 7 level = Craftsman, 9 level = Superintendent

Figure 4 displays the options for coding positions for deployment availability. Positions are tasked depending on AEF timing and then based on availability coding. Essentially, if your position is coded to deploy for either a steady state or wartime requirement (DWS) for Cycle 4 in AEF 1, then pack your bags and sunscreen, because you are very likely to deploy this summer. On the other hand, if your position is coded as DXX, you will probably support home station and reach back requirements in support of those units deployed. However, it is still imperative to maintain a high level of readiness in case there are insufficient positions to deploy within a particular AEF "bucket" and we need you to deploy.

Figure 4. Availability of Deployable Positions

- DWS = Steady State and Major Theater War
- DXS = Steady State Only
- DWX = War Only
- DXX = Home Station

Associate Unit Type Codes (UTCs)

➤ *AWS, AXS, AWX, AXX have same deployable relationship as "D" coded positions, except the code identifies the POSITION as not meeting a standard FM war mission capability.*

➤ *INDIVIDUAL can meet capability based on previous duty experience*

   Example: Cost Analyst with Operations and Maintenance budget experience

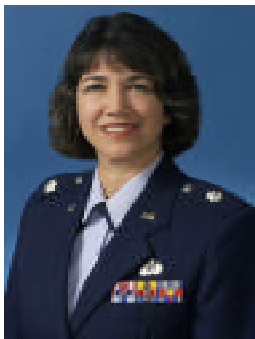| Deploy	War	Steady State
D	W	S
D	X	S
D	W	X
D	X	X

Note: The "X" excludes position availability for either war or steady state.

Being ready to deploy is at the heart of our expeditionary mindset. Approximately **6 months** before each AEF begins, the unit commander notifies the individual as to their specific AEF window of vulnerability. As soon as you are notified, you must start completing ancillary training, such as *Law of Armed Conflict, Antiterrorism Training,* and *Self-Aid and Buddy Care*. This is also the time to complete the *Comptroller Contingency Familiarization Course*, now available on the SAF/FM website, **www.saffm.hq.af.mil/**. Within 3 months of a known deployment, you must become familiar with the area of responsibility (**AOR**). Most component commands, such as Central Command Air Force (**CENTAF**) and United States Air Forces in Europe Command (**USAFE**) provide a familiarization course or information on their homepages specifically for their AOR. In some cases, you will be able to contact the individual you will be replacing.

We are critical to the support of the warfighter in a vast range of expeditionary support taskings at deployed locations all over the world. It is vital for our comptroller community to embrace our wartime expeditionary role. It is our *raison d'être*, i.e., our reason for being, and our mission! **Be ready to be your best when the Air Force needs you the most.**

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Lilly Lopez is Chief, Air Force Comptroller War Plans, SAF/FMPC, the Pentagon, Washington DC. Her comptroller assignments include tours as base level cost analyst, acquisition cost analyst, wing comptroller, executive officer, and chief MAJCOM division plans and programs. She holds a Bachelor in Science degree in Math from InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico and a Master in Science degree in Cost Analysis from the Air Force Institute of Technology. She is a member of the American Society of Military Comptrollers.